Tamil Nadu graffiti – Perumukkal cave inscriptions – Varuna sacrifice.

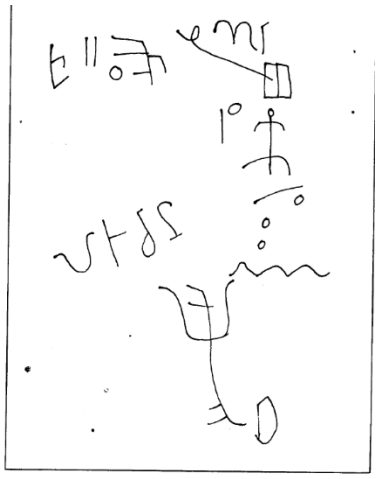

FIGURE : 60
ROCK ENGRAVINGS - PERUMUKKAL VILLAGE, NEAR DINDIVANAM, SOUTH ARCOT DISTRICT

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The picture beside shows rock engravings from Perumukkal village, Near Dindivanam, South Arcot district, Tamil Nadu, India—reference page number 326 from the book by Gurumurthy. (1)

Gurumurthy explains that this cave inscription describes a visit by a local chieftain, followed by 11 persons, who visited the cave. I disagree with this interpretation.

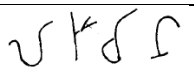
This inscription mentions the sacrifices made to "Karuppaswami" to help the chieftain, buried in that cave, attain heaven. Attaining heaven is the typical idea of Tamil Nadu Pot graffiti and Indus Valley seal inscriptions. (pages 180 and 181).

One difficulty with the Tamil Nadu inscription is that the Indus script letters continued to be used along with Tamil Brahmi letters till the Sangam age. We must be alert when interpreting Tamil symbols because many of the Brahmi letters look similar to Indus script symbols, yet they are different and have different meanings.

Table 1 Reading of Perumukkal cave inscriptions.

Tamil "Vu" symbol Vu means day, and it is read with the second day symbol, the second day after death. Read with the following letter in the next column.	Number two indicates the second day, the second day after death. (or) It could have meant Dvi-kavu also. Dvi-kavu means two sacrifices, one for Pithru and the second for the god.	This symbol indicates the noose of Varuna.[2] (or) A water droplet could have indicated Varuna.	The offering symbol (comb-like symbol) is modified to the word - Kavu – the tail-like appendage indicates the "Vu" sound. Read, along with the preceding symbol, means Varuna-Kavu,	The first symbol shows the correction of the order of symbols. The gatekeeper god had been missed, which had been introduced here by a link. The gatekeeper could be Karuppasami.	Mountain god - Varuna The "M" symbol indicates a mountain, and the stick symbol indicates the sastha symbol (Branch symbol) of Varuna.

[2] It is surprising that Gurumurthy said this figure indicates number 10, how is that possible? The Tamil numbers were written differently. Gurumurthy says it is number 10; it looks like a modern "zero". I think it is not a correct interpretation.

See the note below[1]					
The stick symbol shows Varna's stick. The circle symbol could be the noose of Varuna or the water droplet symbol. The second possibility is that it could indicate the gatekeeper god, "Karuppaswami", also known as "Karuppan". Which literally leads to the word "Karuvan".	These symbols are not Brahmi letters but pictorial representations of a desired word. The chosen word could be Varuna. The sky above, the rainwater drop in the middle, and the water below indicate Varuna's watery realm.	This word can be read as "Kar-Vendhan", a Tamil Word for Varuna.  The above figure shows another variation by the same author on page 181.	This part of the cave inscription shows the process of the dead man's soul ascending to heaven. This heaven symbol is vertically demonstrated in the above symbol.		
This word can also be read as "Karuvan". Karavan means "Shiva". Shiva was the god of the mountain as well as the dead. It is possible that a sacrifice was also made to Shiva. Please see the reference from the Lexilogos online dictionary. (2) The most logical explanation is that Karuppasami was called " Karuvan" (Karuppan)(Black colour god). Further, the stick symbol is common to Varuna and the Gatekeeper god. In addition, the gatekeeper symbol of the gate also appears in the inscription. Considering all these factors, it can be safely assumed that the name mentioned in the inscription indicates the god "Karuppaswami"					

In the conclusion, it looks like a funeral ritual of a chieftain in a cave; most likely, he was buried there. Either his name was "Karuvan" or he prayed to the god "Karuvan"(Karuppa-swami). The ritual says a sacrifice was done to please the god Varuna, Shiva, or both gods. It is possible that a sacrifice can be dedicated to two gods or one Pithru and one god. Finally, the last part of the inscription shows the ascension of the dead man's soul to heaven.

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[1] "Vu" symbol means "day" in the Tamil Language: ( ) This Tamil Brahmi is likely equal to Tamil's ' (vu)' symbol. (Refer to the Tamil symbols on the website Omniglot.com.) . "Vu " symbol stands for the word " day" in the Tamil Language, and even now it is in usage, but this symbol is not regularly used; it is used only on special occasions, like marriage invitation cards, funeral cards, or some essential traditional documents.